

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

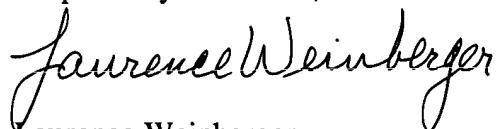
The outstanding Office Action dated November 21, 2003 was the first Office Action after the filing of an RCE by Applicants. During the initial prosecution of this application, the Examiner had allowed claim 2, but had rejected claim 1. The Examiner and Applicants had exchanged differing views on the interpretation of the term "heterogeneous compound database" as employed in claim 1. In the November 21, 2003 Office Action (the first after the RCE), the Examiner has allowed claim 2 but has continued the rejection of claim 1 as before under 35 U.S.C. 102(e). Applicants have considered the Examiner's remarks and appreciate his patience in presenting his viewpoint. However, Applicants still respectfully disagree with the Examiner's position. Rather than continuing these written exchanges, Applicants believe that a face to face discussion with the Examiner of their differences will more expeditiously advance the prosecution of this application. Accordingly, Applicants request an interview with the Examiner before the Examiner undertakes the next Office Action. This request is repeated in a separate paper filed with this Response.

Minor amendment has been made to claim 2. Since the preamble recites that a search for molecules is being implemented, the use of the term "compound" in the method steps has been changed for consistency to a database "molecule" in 2(d). Similarly, for consistency, 2(f) and 2(g) now recite "database molecule." Finally, the reference in 2(f) to "aligned query fragments" was incorrect. At this step, the reference should be to "aligned database molecule fragments."

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Response Dated May 21, 2004
Reply to Office Action of November 21, 2003

Applicants had hoped to resolve the 35 U.S.C. 102(e) issue before proceeding to present additional claims to the invention. However, so that these claims may be considered before the interview and next office action, additional claims have been presented with this Response. The new claims incorporate the basic framework of claim 2 which the Examiner has allowed.

Respectfully submitted,



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